



Ghost Fleet Study Results Completed

In October, 2019 and in February, 2020, a team of archeologists from the St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP) performed an in-depth study of what we have named the "Nansemond River Ghost Fleet." They used sophisticated measuring equipment for observing, measuring, and documenting the site, and they extended their study to include both banks of the river for a considerable distances upstream and downstream from the shipwrecks we discovered.

As intense as their visit to Suffolk was, it was just part of the "data gathering" portion of the study. While they were here and after they left, they spent many hours poring over old documents and records, in an effort to understand what the shipwrecks were and why they were in the locations where they were found. *(cont'd page 4 & 5)*

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS

Stephanie Moore, President
Hazel White, Vice President
Sandra Council, Secretary
Art Robb, Treasurer
Tommy Arthur, Assistant Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS

Kermit Hobbs, Historian
Pretlow Henderson
Kerry Holmes
Steve Jackson
Lee King
Ralph Nahra
Justin Sorensen

LETTER FROM ARCHIVIST



Back in March, we were working on two separate projects and making incredible progress. Unfortunately, COVID-19 became part of our reality, and our exceptional volunteers, Lisa Amos and Evelyn Harris had to stop assisting us.

Lisa was working with me every Tuesday in the attic, creating an inventory list and taking digital images of objects that were originally inventoried in the early 1990s. This work allows SNHS to expand upon the limited information we currently have about each individual object and to gain easier access by knowing the exact location.

Evelyn's projects included creating inventory lists of donations and identifying subject matter on thousands of slides that SNHS acquired from the train station. Evelyn was also volunteering every Tuesday, allowing SNHS to accomplish so much.

Thank you, Lisa and Evelyn for your time and dedication! I am looking forward to the new normal when we are all working together again.

Debra Smith

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Members

What a challenging year 2020 has been thus far for all! Our community has been faced with situations, which we have not dealt with in our history. We are living through events that our children's children will be talking about 50 years from now.

With that being said, after 54 years of existence the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society is still thriving in the community. Preserving our history is more important now than ever before. We must work diligently to keep intact the history of our community for generations to come. Our mission statement states, "The Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society envisions a community of citizens with a love and appreciation of our history, applying knowledge from the past in determining the path for the future", and this is what we strive for daily.

Thank you so much for your steady support, especially during a time when we need it the most.

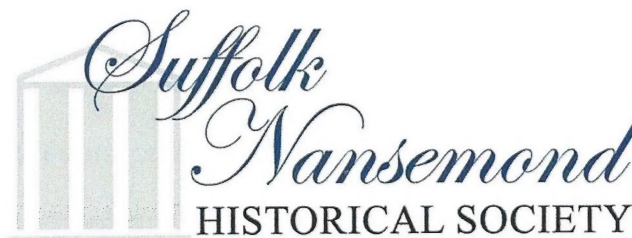
Kimberly Greene

TEMPORARY HOURS UNTIL AUGUST

Thursday 9:00am-1:00pm

APPOINTMENT ONLY

*Mask required



"DO NOT DELAY, BECOME A SNHS MEMBER TODAY"

**"DON'T MAKE ME
REPEAT MYSELF"
-HISTORY**

*Calling all 2020-2021 members of the
Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society.
We need your support more than ever, please
return your membership forms or call
757.539.2781 to renew by phone.
Tell your friends and neighbors about SNHS.*

Suffolk High School Yearbooks



*Suffolk High School Yearbooks can be viewed online by
following the link below or by visiting our website.*

[https://archive.org/
details@suffolk_nansemond_historical_society?
sort=titleSorter](https://archive.org/details@suffolk_nansemond_historical_society?sort=titleSorter)

SUFFOLK LITERARY CLUB

In April, the *Suffolk Literary Club* celebrated their 125th anniversary in grand style at the Phillips-Dawson House. After months of planning, they treated their members to an exhibit featuring memorabilia from 125 years of existence and a beautiful tea.

Beginning in 1894, they were the first literary club organized in Suffolk and 2nd in state of Virginia.



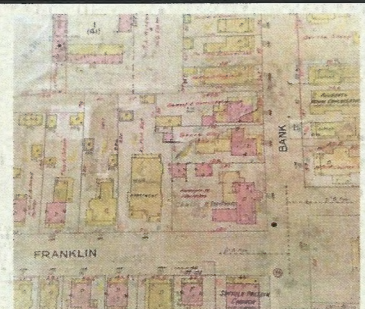
- *First club to organize & work as a unit for the Red Cross in World War I & World War II.*
- *Adopted a French orphan in World War I.*
- *Knitted many sweaters for World War I soldiers.*
- *Originated idea of beautifying highways.*
- *Originated and fostered Suffolk Women's Club.*
- *Sponsored a memorial Library for soldiers which came to be the Public Library in Women's Club.*
- *Had an honorary male member, Reverend Joseph B. Dunn in 1910.*

The *Suffolk Literary Club* exhibit will be on display at the Phillips-Dawson House until the end of July. Please call for an appointment to view.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Sanborn Map Company was a publisher of detailed maps of U.S. cities and towns in the 19th and 20th centuries. The maps were originally created to allow fire insurance companies to assess their total liability in urbanized areas of the United States.

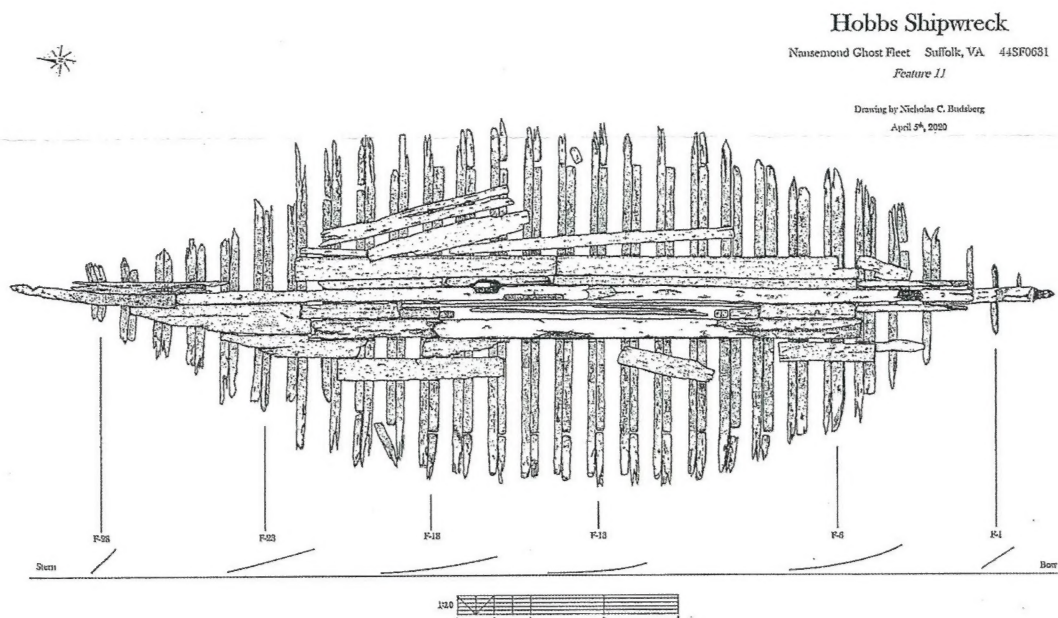
Suffolk, Virginia's Sanborn Maps are instrumental in local research. SNHS is fortunate to house many of them and they are used on a regular basis for research. These maps are available for the community to view during regular business hours.



Ghost Fleet Study Results Completed *(cont'd. from page 1)*

The final 100+ page report of their study has now been completed and will soon be available online. It reflects the same degree of professionalism that we observed during the archaeologists' visits to Suffolk.

The most notable of the features they observed was the "Hobbs wreck", a so-called "Bugeye" vessel near the Super 8 hotel. According to the report, "This type of craft was common to the region between 1870-1930." This boat was double-ended and probably had an extended deck at the stern end for the helmsman to stand. The report states that this hull style emerged to support the oyster fishery in the Chesapeake Bay. The boat had two masts, with the foremast being taller than the mainmast. It was "square rigged," referring to the shape of its sails. It once had a "chest" or "trunk" where the centerboard could be pulled up when the boat was in shallow water. There were only 37 square-rigged Bugeyes built around the Chesapeake Bay between 1870 and 1918, one of which must have been this one. Its present location is interesting in that it rests adjacent to the remains of a loading dock of the McAnge oyster business shown on Sanborn insurance maps. Clearly, it was used in the oyster business.



Just west of the Hobbs wreck lies the "Funkhouser Fleet," so named for the property owner of part of the fleet. This consists of "at least six wooden vessels and appears to form a vessel abandonment area on the outside bend in the Nansemond River where the channel turns to the north." At periods of very low tide, these wrecks present an impressive sight that reflects the large amount of commerce carried on here in past. A large piling between two of the larger vessels was probably set "to moor them in place and prevent them from coming adrift during periods of high water." The most impressive of the wrecks in this group were two flat bottomed "scow barges." These had no provisions for masts or other features needed for sailing. The larger is 122 feet long and 19 ½ feet wide.

Other vessels in the Funkhouser group include a small barge or floating work platform; a "skipjack", a small single-masted sailing vessel that could be handled by two men and might have carried oysters, watermelons, firewood, or other cargoes; another barge; and a possible Oyster Buyboat that is nearly unrecognizable. This latter vessel was equipped with a three-cylinder engine that is still visible at low tide.

Further upstream on the east side of the river are the remains of at least two more vessels. These are partially buried in the bank where they were used to extend the shoreline. The report states that "The practice of placing abandoned vessels along the shorelines and filling them with spoil to create land is widespread. Vessel remains act to stabilize soil along waterfronts and the practice is a convenient way to dispose of abandoned craft." The visible parts are behind a vacant lot now for sale on North Main Street.



Figure 37. Three-cylinder engine on Vessel 6 of Feature 5. Note the flywheel, facing forward on the vessel.

The archaeologists' report concludes, "The Nansemond Ghost Fleet Site... provides a glimpse into one of the city's most pivotal chapters. Rebounding from the economic desertification wrought by the Civil War, Suffolk leaned on its maritime commerce as much as its railroads to get back on firm footing. The oyster, shingle, lumber, brick and lime businesses that fronted the Nansemond were a crucial part of Suffolk's economic engine. The Nansemond Ghost Fleet contains elements of each of these industries. Additionally, the diversity of vessel types present with the site is unique and highly valuable to the understanding of watercraft development, morphology, and use through the Chesapeake Bay region."

The report concludes that "The Nansemond Ghost Fleet will inevitably continue to erode, rot, and otherwise decay. Continued research into this site as well as additional survey and documentation is recommended."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: *Kermit Hobbs, Historian, Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society; Brendan Burke, President, Maritime Heritage Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia; Bob and Mary Hayes, Project Coordinators Mid-Atlantic Logboat Registry, Maritime Heritage Chapter, Archaeological Society of Virginia; Dr. John Broadwater, State Underwater Archaeologist President, Maritime Heritage Chapter, Archaeological Society of Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Dr. Elizabeth Moore, State Archaeologist, Division Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Ms. Kathy Fleming, Executive Director, St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum.*



HAPPENINGS & EVENTS

**Please mark your calendars now, but all events are subject to cancellation due to COVID-19!*

ANNUAL SALE

Every year in September the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society holds an Annual Sale. The items in the sale are donated throughout the year by our members. All proceeds from this sale goes towards operational expenses. You do not want to miss this event!



WHEN: Saturday, September 19, 2020

TIME: 8:00am-2:00pm

WHERE: Phillips-Dawson House

**To make a donation towards sale, please call 757.539.2781 to schedule a drop off.*

FALL MEMBERS DESSERT MEETING

In October the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society hosts a Fall Members Dessert at the Phillips-Dawson House. What a great time to meet other members and enjoy delicious desserts! This year Kermit Hobbs will be speaking on the further results of the Nansemond Ghost Fleet.

WHEN: Saturday, October 12, 2020

TIME: 6:00am-8:00pm

WHERE: Phillips-Dawson House



**Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society will be providing all desserts and beverages.*

TOUCH-A-TRUCK, TRAIN, TRICK OR TREAT & MORE

Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, in conjunction with the City of Suffolk, sponsors our largest fundraiser of the year, Touch-A-Truck, Train and Trick-or-Treat. This is a great community and family event that we look forward to every year.



WHEN: Saturday, October 31, 2020

TIME: 11:00am-2:00pm

WHERE: Suffolk Seaboard Railroad Museum

**Volunteers are critical to the success of this event, please volunteer today!*

PLEASE DONATE!



We are taking donations now through September 14th for items to include in our *Annual Sale*.

Please bring your items by the Phillips-Dawson House for easy drop off. We accept furniture, heirlooms, glassware, stemware, silver, knick-knacks, and a variety of household items.

The *Annual Sale* is a fundraiser for SNHS and all proceeds go towards operational expenses.



HISTORIC SUFFOLK NARRATED BUS TOUR

In conjunction with Suffolk Tourism, their Historic Downtown Narrated Bus Tour will now include periodic stops at the Phillips-Dawson House for house tours.

Last year, we conducted over 100 tours of the facility, with visitors throughout the United States, Canada, Asia and France.

You can sign up to take the tour yourself or tell a friend/family member that this historic tour is available. Please check their website for dates and availability throughout the year.

<https://www.visitsuffolkva.com>

Phillips-Dawson House Venue Rentals

The Phillips-Dawson House is available for clubs, receptions, parties, meetings, speakers and even weddings.

Our facility can accommodate up to 75 standing and 40 seated. Banquet-ware is available up to 40 and we have a full kitchen and bar area for your convenience.

We have a concert grand piano & plenty of room for other musical equipment.

The back yard area can also be used for an outdoor event.

Set rates for rental use is required during regular business hours. There are additional fees for after hours use. We look forward to hosting your next special event, as you make your own history.



Coming NEXT Newsletter!

- ⇒ *Article* featuring William E. MacClenny
- ⇒ *Special Collections* from our archives.
- ⇒ *Afternoon Conversations* speakers!
- ⇒ *Preservation of Historic Suffolk* news.
- ⇒ *Renovations* at the Phillips-Dawson House

HISTORY MATTERS

Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society
501(c)(3) Non-Profit

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephanie Moore, President
Hazel White, Vice President
Sandra Council, Secretary

Art Robb, Treasurer

Tommy Arthur, Assistant Treasurer
Kermit Hobbs, Historian
Pretlow Henderson

Kerry Holmes
Steve Jackson

Lee King
Ralph Nahra
Justin Sorensen

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Kimberly Blair Greene

ARCHIVIST
Debra Calvin Smith

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday	9:00am-3:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-3:00pm
Wednesday	CLOSED
Thursday	9:00am-3:00pm
Friday	9:00am-12:00pm
Saturday	CLOSED
Sunday	CLOSED

**Temporary hours now in place*

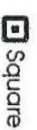
Check out our webpage:
suffolkhistory.org

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Follow us on Twitter:

twitter.com/SNVVAhistory



SUFFOLK NANSEMOND



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1255

Suffolk, Virginia 23439-1255

Return Service Requested

